

Epidemiology Bulletin

REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Measles — Taipei City

We recently reported an increase in the number of measles cases diagnosed in three Taipei City hospitals through the month of November 1984.¹ Outpatient and inpatient records of these same hospitals were reviewed for the months of December 1984 and January 1985, and a large increase in the number of measles cases was found (Figure 1). Data from the outpatient clinic of National Taiwan University Hospital (NTUH) from January 1972 to December 1984 show that outbreaks of measles occurred regularly in Taipei City until about 1980. The age distribution of measles cases diagnosed in December and January in the NTUH outpatient clinic indicate almost half (49%) were

Figure 1. Number of measles case diagnosed of three Taipei City hospitals, January 1984 to January 1985.

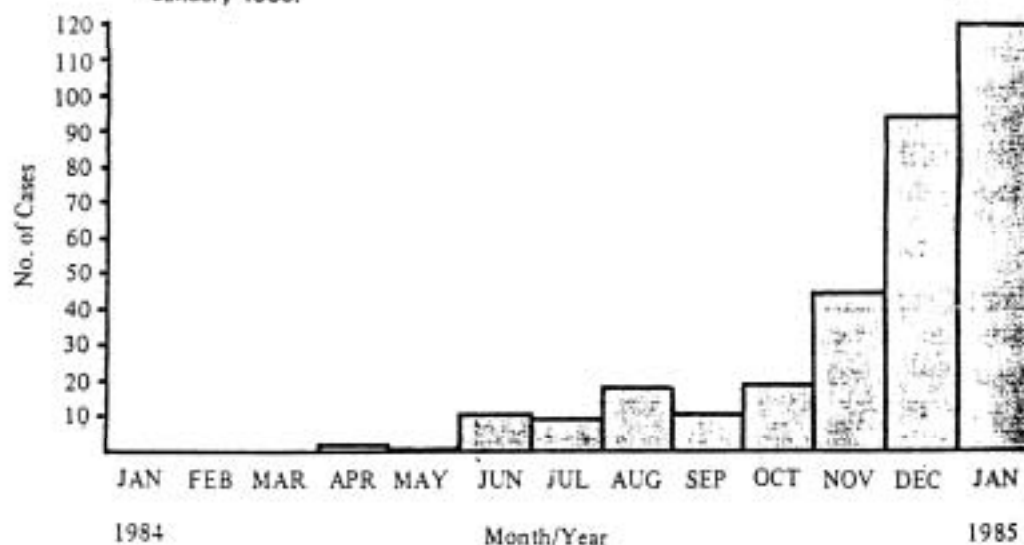
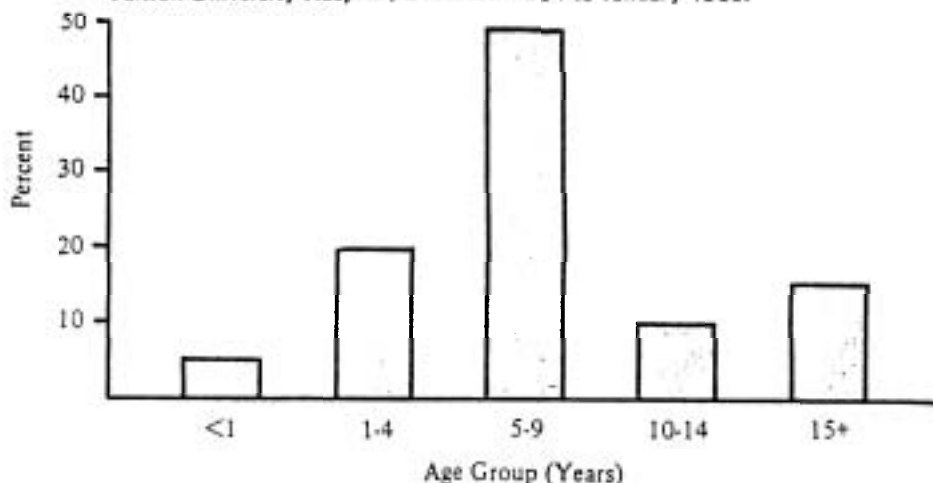


Figure 2. Age distribution of 41 measles cases diagnosed in the outpatient clinic of National Taiwan University Hospital, December 1984 to January 1985.



children in the 5-9 year age group (Figure 2). A recent immunization coverage survey of Taipei City children 12-23 months of age showed that 80 percent were immunized with measles vaccine.¹ Immunization rates in older children are unknown, but are probably lower. On January 10, 1985, the Department of Health notified the Provincial and City Health Departments (Taipei and Kaohsiung) of the increase in measles activity and requested their cooperation in increasing immunization rates. Data from Taipei and Kaohsiung City Health Departments show a substantial increase in the number of doses of measles vaccine administered in January compared with previous months (Table 1). Data for January from the Provincial Health Department are presently unavailable. An investigation is underway to determine the immunization status of the cases diagnosed at NTUH and to identify common exposures at social gatherings or in schools. An immunization coverage survey among Taipei City school children is also planned.

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Table 1. Doses of measles vaccine administered by Taipei and Kaohsiung City Health Departments, July 1984 to January 1985

Month	Year	No Doses			Percent Change From Previous Mo.
		Taipei	Kaohsiung	Total	
Jul	1984	3,427	3,429	6,856	-
Aug	1984	3,601	3,276	6,877	+ <1%
Sep	1984	3,339	3,712	7,051	+ 3%
Oct	1984	3,523	3,203	6,726	- 5%
Nov	1984	3,302	2,937	6,239	- 7%
Dec	1984	3,789	2,786	6,575	+ 5%
Jan	1985	6,376	4,527	10,903	+ 66%

Editorial note: The results of our investigation in Taipei City indicate transmission may be occurring among primary school children. Live measles vaccine was first included in Taipei City's immunization program in 1976. Children presently 5-9 years old were born after measles vaccine was introduced, however, coverage in the early years of the program may not have been high. Children in this age group were probably exposed to measles during the outbreaks in 1978 and 1980; however, there has been little opportunity for exposure since. Children this age are not presently considered important targets for the immunization program. It is therefore possible that the number of susceptibles in this age group is large enough to sustain an epidemic, especially in a school environment. School transmission of measles has been well documented in the United States and some states have passed school immunization laws to help bring the situation under control.

One of the main obstacles to the control of measles in Taiwan is the lack of measles surveillance data. Measles was recently added to the list of reportable diseases, however, many hospitals and health stations have not yet begun reporting. As a result, the extent of measles transmission outside of Taipei City is unknown. The Bureau of Disease Control requests the assistance of all hospitals and clinics in reporting cases through local health departments. Any suspected outbreaks should be reported immediately by telephone to the Bureau of Disease Control (02-712-3761).

References

1. Department of Health. Measles immunization survey - Taipei City. *Epidemiol Bull (R.O.C.)* 1985; 1:19, 22-4